

# FINDS AND FINDINGS

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The term archaeology derives from the Greek words «archaios» (old) and «logos» (teaching). Which means as much as «lore of antiquity» or «scientific study of antiquity», always in relation to the history of man and his environment.

Originally archaeology was concerned with non-literate or low-grade literate epochs, i.e. with prehistory and early history (Roman epoch). This insofar as they can be uncovered by excavation, meaning the decoding of archaeological findings. This can include entire settlements, also foundation-walls of houses, burial grounds and pits. Other remains of human activity are for example ritual sites, hoard finds and slag disposal sites, also finds such as stone tools, metal objects, pottery, bone artefacts or remains of bones.

Task and aim of archaeology is to excavate, document, and to interpret these findings and finds as precisely as possible. They lead to insights into the history of man and his natural environment, that is to historical conclusions.

At a later time archaeological methods were also used for the historical epochs. This includes archaeology of the Middle Ages, castle research, archaeology of churches, the investigation of town centres and even industrial archaeology. The latter also deals with modern topics such as mines, mine shafts, furnaces, limekilns, ceramics and glass

manufacturing, as well as various trade aspects. This branch of science reaches in part into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Today archaeology is a modern science, which works closely together with the natural sciences. These include botany, zoology, anthropology, climatology, geology, dendrochronology, chemistry and physics (C-14-dating).

**Archaeology in Graubünden** There were people in Graubünden who were interested in archaeology as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Ulrich Campell, for example, mentioned the columns and cart tracks on the Julier Pass around 1570. There is evidence of archaeological collecting in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Roman Welschdörfli in Chur. 1869 the «Historisch-Antiquarische Gesellschaft» (Historical and Antiquarian Society) and 1872 the Rätisches Museum were founded. In 1903 the «Urgeschichte Graubündens mit Einschluss der Römerzeit» (Prehistory of Graubünden including the Roman Period) was published.

A first archaeological dig took place in 1902 in the Custorei of Chur (today Stadthallenplatz). Further excavations were carried out in 1930–50 under the direction of the forester Walo Burkart. Names such as Hans Conrad, Walter Sulser and Benedikt Frei also belong to this period.

After a position as conservator was created at the Rätische Museum in 1960, emergency excavations could also be carried out. With the founding of the office for archaeology in the year 1967 archaeological activity with extensive excavations and numerous publications increased greatly.

# STONE AGE

600 000 – 2200 B.C.

The Stone Age is the longest period in the history of mankind. In the area of Switzerland its beginnings still remain largely in the dark.

**Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic)** During the Old Stone Age the Alpine valleys were covered by thick ice masses. Therefore Palaeolithic sites or finds can hardly be expected in Graubünden. Conceivable are only finds of cave-bear hunters in caves or below rock shelters at the edge or above the glaciers. Such was the case in the «Drachenloch» (Dragon's Cave) above Vättis SG at 2450m or the Apollohöhle above St.Antönien-Partun at 2300m. Very simple stone and bone artefacts were discovered there, partly also hearth remains.

Between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> millennium the Rheintal glaciers retreated. After that, a first vegetation established itself in the Rheintal of Chur. Game animals advanced from the north into the Alpine Rhine valley. And during the summer months hunter groups followed the traces of the wild game. In winter these groups probably dwelt in the region of the Vorarlberg (radiolarite from the Grosses Walsertal and silex from Bavaria).

Radiolarite, silex, and rock-crystal artefacts from Chur-Marsöl are from the late phase of the Old Stone Age. They date back from the time between 11'000 and 9500 B.C.



**Middle Stone Age (Mesolithic)** That only very few discovery sites are known in Graubünden is also true of the Mesolithic. It is significant that the Mesolithic-Neolithic hunter resting-place of Mesocco-Tec Nev was 8m deep under the present turf. It came to light only thanks to the construction of the motorway. Countless worked flint artefacts and towards 4000 flint and rock crystal chips were found on this site. They date back to the early and late Mesolithic. Some early Neolithic pottery and flint material was also recovered.

Mesolithic settlements and resting places situated at valley bottoms now probably lie deeply hidden under rock-fall and landslide material. Or else the activity of the rivers has definitely destroyed them in the course of thousands of years.

However, today resting places of hunters are increasingly being found in the high mountains. For instance on the Pian dei Cavalli (Val San Giacomo, Italy, 2200m) situated not far from the Mesolcina. Other wellknown examples are Plan Canin in the Forno valley (south of Maloja, 1990m) or in the area of the Lai da Rims (Val Müstair, 2400m).

**New Stone Age (Neolithic)** Today a total of nine Neolithic settlements are known in Graubünden: Chur-Areal Zindel and Ackermann, Untervaz-Haselboden and Haselbodenkopf, Zizers-Friedau, Tamins-Crestis, Cazis-Petrushügel, Mesocco-Tec Nev and Castaneda-Pian del Remit. These are without exception smaller settlements, which probably hardly lasted for more than 100 to 150 years. Whereas the one or the other of these settlements date back to an earlier up to a more developed Neolithic (5<sup>th</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> millennium for Zizers, Chur, Mesocco), the others belong to a rather later phase of the New Stone Age (3<sup>rd</sup> millennium).

Of interest is the evidence of an early plough agriculture in Chur and Castaneda. Remarkable is also the circumstance that these settlements are concentrated on lower lying transit valleys (Rheintal, Domleschg and Mesolcina). A Neolithic resting place is also evident in Zernez-Ova Spin. Single Neolithic finds in the mountains or in higher valleys are numerous, such as stone axes, silex and rock crystal devices. They are probably proof of hunters or shepherds rather than of settlements.

# BRONZE AGE

2200 – 800 B.C.

After devices made of copper had already made their appearance in the late phase of the New Stone Age, tools and weapons were now newly manufactured of bronze. (Bronze is a copper-tin alloy).

With the Early Bronze Age an intensive new settlement of the Alpine region of Graubünden occurred. In place of the sparse New Stone Age dwellings came fifty to sixty longer lasting settlements. They could now be found not only in the lower valleys but also in high Alpine valleys (Lugnez, Oberhalbstein, Engadin). These new settlements may probably be due to the discovery of copper ores on Graubünden soil. The new processing technology led to new activities. These included copper prospecting, mining, copper smelting, bronze casting, etc. This is likely to have led to a more intensified trade over the Alpine passes and ultimately also to certain social changes.

The inhabitants of Bronze Age villages were farmers. They subsisted on agriculture (wheat, einkorn wheat, emmer wheat, spelt, barley, etc.) and livestock breeding. Hunting played only a very secondary role.

In the Early and Middle Bronze Age and partly still in the Late Bronze Age, based on special forms in ceramics, a self-contained culture manifested itself on Graubünden soil. Originally it was called «Crestaulta-Culture», today it is known as «Inner Alpine Bronze Age Culture». It clearly differs from the southern and northern Alpine cultures.

During the Late Bronze Age (13<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) this «Inner Alpine Bronze Age Culture» was obviously displaced. During this time new cultures penetrated the Alpine region of Graubünden. They led to a cultural trisection, which can still be shown very nicely in the Iron Age.

**Settlements** As a rule Bronze Age settlements were on hillcrests, on prominent rock bands and slope terraces, which were easy to defend. Settlements at the bottom of valleys do not seem to have appeared until the Late Bronze Age. In Savognin-Padnal the settlement was situated in a natural dell, which was 2 to 3m deep, in Cazis-Cresta even in a 5 to 6m deep rock crevice. In Falera-Muota the settlement was between mighty boulders. It was fortified by a surrounding wall. This suggests that the first settlers felt a great need for protection.

In well-excavated settlements the post and beam and log constructions with hearths or even entire settlements can be construed. The cisterns of Savognin-Padnal and the spring water catchment of St. Moritz are testimony to a highly developed wood-construction technique. As a rule residential buildings were built in larch wood. Spruce served mainly as firewood. The settlements partly survived several hundred or even more than a thousand years. In smaller settlements 20–30 people lived, in larger ones 50–100.

**Burial Finds** Few Bronze Age burial finds are known from the Alpine region of Graubünden. In Donat-Surses six stone chest-graves with inhumations were discovered in 1926 and 1961. The burial objects date back to the late Early Bronze Age (17<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century B.C.). However, the famous vaulted grave of Donat («Kuppelgrab von Donat») is probably a medieval vaulted cellar (Crot), which disturbed an Early Bronze Age grave.

There are further Early Bronze Age inhumations without burial objects from Laax-Salums as well. Of greatest importance are eleven cremation burials from Lumbrein-Surin-Cresta Petschna. They are all women's graves equipped with rich jewellery gifts, which obviously belong to the settlement on the Crestaulta. They date back to the early Middle Bronze Age (16<sup>th</sup>/beginning 15<sup>th</sup> century) and are influenced by the burial mound culture.

From the Late Bronze Age there is an urnfieldgrave of Fläsch-Answiesen – unfortunately severely damaged – and a female burial of Domat/Ems. The latter contained a bow fibula of southern origin, earrings and some pottery.

**Finds in Mountains and Waters** Single finds, which were discovered in the mountains as well as on mountain passes, are numerous. Hunters or herdsmen could have lost these. However, these finds could also be evidence of Bronze Age Alpine farming. In individual cases they might be votive offerings to a mountain deity.

For example swords, lances and other objects are found just as often in waters, in rivers, lakes or also in or around springs. Whether these are lost objects or votive offerings to a water deity is unclear. Two bronze axes near a spring above Rueun or several sword finds, a dagger, and a pin in the spring-water tapping of St.Moritz-Bad could have been votive offerings to a spring deity.

The spring-water tapping system of St.Moritz is a highly interesting wooden structure. It consists of a log chest and a plank chest; inside there are two vertical pipes as well as a climbing device. Everything is made of larch wood and dates back to the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C.



**Jewellery** In the Bronze Age bronze pins were very often worn as garment fasteners. Coarse linen fabrics were fastened with these. After the Late Bronze Age fibulae replaced the bronze pins. Additional ornamental objects were bracelets and finger rings, necklaces with amber and small bronze roulettes or thorn discs, buttons made of bone and bronze, which were probably sewn onto fabric. The intended use of deer horn roses is uncertain. The boar's tusk lamella may have served as a wrist-guards for archers.

The most significant object found is the beautifully decorated disc-headed pin from Falera-Muota. It is 85cm long. Because of its size it is unlikely that it was worn by a woman. It could have been used as a cult or prestige object, for example to decorate a wooden statue.

Bronze and amber jewellery was a privilege of the upper class. Jewellery pieces as grave goods were supposed to ensure the social position of the deceased in the hereafter. There were certainly also ornaments made of simple materials, which however have not survived.

## **FINDS AND FINDINGS** A short chronology

### **Early Middle Ages (400–800 A.D.)**

from 773/774

Inclusion of Raetia in Charlemagne's empire

6<sup>th</sup> to–8<sup>th</sup> c.

Dynasty of the Zaccons/Victorids in Churraetia

6<sup>th</sup>–beg. 9<sup>th</sup> c.

Completion of the Christianisation process  
(demolition of ritual cave Zillis)

about 536/537

Integration of Raetia into Merovingian France

5<sup>th</sup> c.

Onset of building early Christian churches

451 A.D.

First mention of a bishop in Chur (Asinio)

### **Roman Era (15 B.C.–400 A.D.)**

3<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> c. and later

Political unrests, building of hilltop settlements

from 395

Christianity becomes state religion, ban of heathen cults

1<sup>st</sup> half 4<sup>th</sup> c.

Chur presumably becomes capital of the province Raetia I

from 1<sup>st</sup> c.

Expansion of trade routes between north and south  
(cart tracks on the Julier pass)

15 B.C.

Conquest of Raetia by the Romans  
(militaria-finds Septimer and Crap Ses area)

### **Iron Age (800–15 B.C.)**

800–15 B.C.

Ironworking, expanded mining, first written documents and coins

### **Bronze Age (2200–800 B.C.)**

2200–800 B.C.

Increase of settlement intensity, bronze and glass processing

### **Stone Age (600000–2200 B.C.)**

5<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C.

Hunters and gatherers become sedentary, agriculture and animal husbandry, first clay pots, copper, invention of the wheel

about 10000 B.C.

First traces of human activity in Graubünden (Chur-Marsöl)

# IRON AGE

800 – 15 B.C.

The Iron Age is divided into an older phase (Hallstatt period) and a younger phase (La Tène period). The raw material iron was first put to use during the Iron Age. Iron artefacts rapidly replaced tools and weapons of bronze. Iron has great advantages: It is robust and elastic, and is much more common in the Alpine region than copper. However, bronze was still used for jewellery. Iron processing required considerable technical know-how. Specialists such as miners, ore masters, blacksmiths were necessary. Smelting furnaces and smithies had to be built.

Trade across the Alpine passes continued to play a major role. Writing appeared for the first time, in the Late Iron Age also monetary economy.

The settlement structure of the Iron Age largely corresponds to that of the Bronze Age. Since the Late Bronze Age, Graubünden – probably due to pressure from outside – became subject to a cultural trisection. This is clearly noticeable during the entire Iron Age.

**Raetians** In southeastern Graubünden (Unterengadin, Münstertal) there is evidence during the Late Bronze Age and Earlier Iron Age of the Laugen-Melaun culture. Its culture-defining feature is the Laugen-Melaun-Jug. It can be found in the Trentino, in the South Tyrol and in the Unterengadin but only sporadically in the Alpine Rhine valley. Typical settlements are Ramosch-Mottata, Scuol-Munt Baselgia and Ardez-Suotchasté. In Scuol-Motta Sfondraz and Zernez-Brail-Funtanatschas there are presumably burnt-offering places on mighty riprap revetments, which are considered to be cult sites.

The Laugen-Melaun culture is replaced by the Fritzens-Sanzeno culture, whose features are small bowls and jugs. In Scuol-Russonch there is a characteristic burnt-offering place. This includes fireplaces and calcinated – that is severely burnt – animal bones. As far as dissemination of the Fritzens-Sanzeno culture goes, the core area is again the Trentino, the South and North Tyrol and the Unterengadin. The bearers of the Laugen-Melaun as well as the Fritzens-Sanzeno culture are today identified with the historical Raetians.

**Celto-Raetians and Celts** As of the Late Bronze Age the urn field culture becomes visible in north and middle Graubünden (Chur-Karlihof, Vella-Pleif, etc.). It clearly advances from the north. In north Graubünden it is overlaid by an element of the Laugen-Melaun culture (Celto-Raetian mixed culture). As of the Earlier Iron Age marked influences of the Hallstatt culture become apparent (Felsberg-Felixwingert, painted pottery from Tamins). In the Later Iron Age with the Tamins and Schneller pottery (Alpine Rhine Valley groups), the grooved pottery (Kammstrich-Keramik) and later the graphite-clay pottery the Celtic northern influence remains clearly visible.

The Laugen-Melaun elements of the Late Bronze Age, which reached northern Graubünden over the Vorarlberg, still recall the Raetian culture. Undoubtedly the Celtic element had been predominant since the Iron Age. For northern Graubünden corresponding settlement-remains exist (Chur-Welschdörfli, Fläsch, Lantsch/Lenz, Suraua, Trun-Darvella, etc.). The same is true of grave finds (Tamins urn grave field, Trun-Darvella, etc.). The Raetian element completely disappears at this time.

**Lepontians** In southwestern Graubünden (Mesolcina, Calancatal, Bergell) there is growing evidence since the Late Bronze Age of a Tessin-Lombardian Canegrate culture. In the Earlier and also in the Later Iron Age the southwestern cultural area of Graubünden clearly belongs to the Golasecca culture. This is above all characterised by a great wealth of finds in its grave inventories. Thus, in the burial ground of Mesocco-Coop there are inhumations and cremations with a wealth of fibula jewellery. In the inhumations of Castaneda and Cama, which are rich in finds, there are again lots of fibula ornaments, pendants, earrings, amber necklaces, Situlae (buckets), beaked flagons, iron swords, jugs, beakers, etc.

Since there are no raw materials in the Misox, the question arises where this wealth came from. It is assumed that during the Iron Age the valley played an intermediary role in trade across the Alpine passes between the Etruscan and the northern Alpine area. Compared to the grave finds the settlement finds turn out to be rather modest. The early Roman writers address the bearers of this culture as Lepontians.



**Trade in Prehistoric and Roman Times** At the time of the New Stone Age there are already indications of some bartering. Thus flint utensils from the French Jura, from Lägeren ZH and also from the Monti Lessini (Trentino) appeared.

During the Bronze Age there was a flourishing trade across the Alpine passes (bronze production, tin trade, amber, ceramic vessels, etc.).

During the Iron Age trade between the Etruscan region and north of the Alps was intensified. In northern Graubünden forms of jewellery from south of the Alps appeared. For the first time there are coin finds. Salt was imported from southern Germany.

In Roman times there is an intensive movement of goods over the Julier pass. Terra Sigillata vessels reached Graubünden. Lavez (soapstone) vessels from Upper Italy, the Bergell and Misox were traded via Chur to Bregenz and Augsburg. Olive oil from Spain, wine from Italy, tropical fruits, oysters, fabrics and spices were imported. Livestock, grain, honey and wax, pitch, rock crystal, Alpine cheese and woollen coats went south. The road system was probably well developed from the middle of the first century A.D. onward.

# ROMAN AGE

15 B.C. – 400 A.D.

Around 16/15 B.C. Roman troops under Emperor Augustus advanced north. The commanders Tiberius and Drusus starting from Gaul and the Trentino led the pincer operation. A third army unit probably advanced from Como over the Septimer Pass through the Oberhalbstein and the Alpine Rhine Valley. Militaria finds especially sling leads on the Septimer and in the Crap Ses area attest to this. In a summer lightning operation of 4 months the Alpine region from the Wallis to Bavaria was conquered. Purpose of the campaign was no doubt the safeguarding of the Alpine passes and establishment of footholds north of the Alps.

A province Raetia with the capital Augsburg was founded only towards the middle of the first century A.D. The province was divided around 300 into Raetia prima (no doubt with the principal town Chur) and the Raetia secunda (capital Augsburg).

The Roman conquest brought extensive cultural changes. Large stone buildings in lime mortar technique now replaced the former wooden structures. The stone houses now often had wall paintings, hypocaust or duct heating systems and were roofed with shingles or even tiles. Baths, theatres and other public buildings were constructed. The local population also bought imported, richly decorated terra sigillata tableware and southern import goods such as tropical fruits, olive oil, wine and more besides.

It wasn't long before individual locals mastered the Latin language and script. Roman monetary economy was introduced, as was within a relatively short time the worship of Roman deities. In the course of several centuries Latin displaced the local languages (the Celtic and the Rhaetian). These only lived on in overlaid substrata. A kind of «Vulgar Latin» or «Raeto Latin» evolved, out of which ultimately the Old Romansch (Altromanisch) and Romansch (Rätoromanisch) developed.

**Chur in Roman Times** There is an inscription from the Welschdörfli in Chur, which is dedicated to Lucius Caesar, a high Roman official. It suggests that Chur was already an administrative centre in early Roman times. The first residential buildings were probably still built of wood. From the middle of the 1st century A.D. on, a busy building activity set in with stone buildings. Numerous houses with Hypocaust and ducted-air heating were constructed. In the area Ackermann there was a hostel with murals and sleeping facilities. In the area of the «Stadthallenplatz» (municipal hall square) there was a large thermal complex, probably also the market and a shrine.

After the Diocletian reform of the Empire around 300 A.D., Chur probably became the capital of the Province Raetia prima. At least since the 4<sup>th</sup> century there was a Roman settlement on the Hof in Chur, which was protected by castle-like walls. There is evidence that an Episcopal see and a grave church on the Hof had existed since the 5<sup>th</sup> century. At this time there were still some residential buildings as well as an early Christian church complex with priests' bench in the Welschdörfli.

**Roman Settlements and Sacred Sites** Beside the Roman Curia there were numerous smaller settlements. There were way stations such as Mutatio of Riom or the settlement of Mon-Crest'Ota, both on the traversable Julier road. Important is also the late Roman customs station of Bondo-Murus/Castelmur. Furthermore there were several fortified castle-like settlements of the late Roman-early medieval time period. Belonging to these were for example Tiefencastel-Kirchhügel, Castiel-Carschlingg, Casti, Vicosoprano-Caslac, and probably also Maladers-Tummihügel West and Sagogn-Schiedberg.

Roman sacred sites are for example the one on the Julier, the cave sanctuary of Zillis, the burnt-offering place of Fläsch-St.Luzisteig. Additional find complexes and grave finds suggesting settlements come from Andeer, Cazis-Niederrealta, Sevgein, Tamins, Trimmis or from the early Roman military camp on the Septimer pass. Significant grave finds and burial grounds are known from Bonaduz-Valbeuna, Roveredo-Tre Pilastris, Cama, Sta.Maria in Calanca and from the ravine of Calfreisen. They all point to a surprising settlement density in Roman times.

# EARLY MIDDLE AGES

400 – 800 A.D.

During the course of the 5<sup>th</sup> century Roman troops partly withdrew from Raetia. The Raetian Alpine region came under Ostrogothic rule as a bulwark against the Germanic tribes. After the death of Theodoric (527) Raetia prima, or rather the Diocese Chur, came more and more under Frankish influence. In the 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> century Raetia prima was Christianised. In Chur a bishopric is documented as of 451. From the 6<sup>th</sup> century on the dynasty of the Zaccos and the local Victorids held the ecclesiastical and secular power in Churraetia. Under Charlemagne Churraetien lost its political independence around 773/74. It was definitively integrated into the Frankish Empire.

Relatively few settlements from the Early Middle Ages have been studied up until now. Most of them developed from late Roman settlements and castle grounds, for example Castiel-Carschlingg, Maladers-Tummihügel, Schiers-Chrea, Tiefencastel, Riom-Cadra or Zernez. This is because these settlements from the Early Middle Ages often lie under today's villages and as the constructions are out of wood they cannot be determined easily. Only church buildings, monasteries and stately buildings (Royal Court Zizers) were still built in stone and bonding mortar. However, the numerous Early Middle Age churches of Graubünden are proof of a considerable density of settlements.



Furthermore there are many Early Middle Age graves and burial sites. However, as a rule they hold only modest grave goods or none at all. One of these is, for example, the late Roman-Early Middle Age burial ground of Bonaduz-Valbeuna with over 700 burials, the graveyards of Chur-St.Stephan, or Schiers-Pfarrhausgarten. Up until the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century heathen cult sites are still in evidence in the Alpine region of Graubünden, for example, in the cave of Zillis.

In Graubünden the ultimate Romanisation of the language probably took place in the Early Middle Ages.

«In archaeology the absurdity of history shows itself. Archaeology reconstructs what was destroyed by history.» (Friedrich Dürrenmatt, 1921–1990)

## **Imprint**

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# STEIN RÄT ALPEN HEILIG

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